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Photo by Yvonne Emmert
Mark Cook gives his all during a recent performance with his Cook 'n' Blues Band at The Verve.

Playing red hot blues

Mark Cook says goodbye to Terre Haute, hello to Atlanta

BY JASON HATHAWAY
TRIBUNE-STAR

In the past year, Terre Haute blues rock guitarist Mark Cook has gone from a case of the blues to having the hottest blues rock band in town and an album that has received accolades from several blues critics.

Just last December, Cook felt frustrated as a musician after local country band Neon Moon broke up.

"I was really depressed about that time because nothing was going on and I didn't think I had anything to look forward to here," he said. "I was looking for a place to relocate to and I didn't know which way to turn."

Cook decided to give Terre Haute another chance, though, forming a new power trio to play the music he'd wanted to play for a long time — blues. With the help of old friend Brad Dart on drums and new prospect Adam Moraga on bass

and vocals, he formed the Cook 'n' Blues Band. The new band set out to bring some new life to the Terre Haute music scene.

"I'd jammed with Brad off and on for years,"

Cook said. "He found a guy who played blues and played bass and sang."

To find a combination like that around here is almost impossible. That turned out to be Adam."

Since their first gig in January at the now defunct Baja Bar & Grill, the Cook 'n' Blues Band can hardly play anywhere in Terre Haute without packing the house. Over the past few months, the band has played for shoulder-to-shoulder crowds at such local bars as The Verve, Terre Haute Brew-

"I might as well enjoy it while it's happening."

Mark Cook, musician with the Cook 'n' Blues Band

ing Co. Tap Room, Sonka Irish Pub and Ambrosini's.

Audience members eagerly listened, many buying his debut CD "An Evening with the Blues," also popular with a handful of blues critics throughout the country. The support of local audiences have allowed Cook to finally play the music he wants for people who really want to hear it.

Just like anything else, however, the time comes when one has to move on. Cook and wife, Wendy, will move to Atlanta next week to further his musical career. He will play a farewell show with Cook 'n' Blues Band from 8:30 p.m. to midnight tonight at the Terre Haute Brewing Co. Tap Room, 904 Poplar St.

This summer, Cook hired longtime friend Dave Wright, owner of a successful independent advertising agency in Atlanta, to be his manager and marketing director.

► Turn to COOK, D2

MUSIC

Sagee Piano Trio performs Saturday at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in the Moench Hall Auditorium as part of the 2001-2002 Fine Arts Series. — D2



"I would like to be able to free people who view my paintings from everyday patterns of perception," says Terre Haute artist Michael Neary. — D6

ART



The chemistry between the ever-charming John Cusack and the delectable Kate Beckinsale in "Serendipity" is as potent as the movies have delivered in ages. — D11

MOVIES



MICHAEL NEARY: LIVING ON THE EDGE

BY STEVE KASH

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE-STAR

Imagine: You stand at the very edge of a cliff overlooking an enormous valley. No ground is before you. All space is open. At first, you feel precariously giddy so close to the edge. You adjust to the sensation. You feel liberated. You want to immerse yourself in space.

That's exactly the feeling that Terre Haute artist Michael Neary hopes to create with his work.

"I would like to be able to free people who view my paintings from everyday patterns of perception," he said.

During the past several months around Terre Haute, Neary's art has become the subject of many conversations. Visitors to the new Java Haute coffeehouse see famous personages from the history of Terre Haute back through the past 175 years thrusting out at them from the canvas of a Neary painting positioned on the back wall. At The Verve, other Neary paintings, near the entryway, and on the wall of the main lounge, command interest of the nightclub's patrons.

Neary also has a window painting at the Crossroads Café, and is at work on an elaborate outside sign for The Terre Haute Brewing Co.; two other Neary paintings were displayed at Arts Illiana's September show.

Coffee Grounds recently had a large exhibit of Neary art. April Simma, who was manager of Coffee Grounds when the Neary show was booked, said, "Neary offered some of the most interesting art we had at Coffee Grounds during the five years I was there. Mike has an unusual way of depicting characters and displaying still life scenes that draws you into the painting."

Neary came to Terre Haute from Indianapolis as a billboard painter for Whiteco nine years ago. Most people in the area have seen examples of his work, which included such memorable Interstate 70 masterpieces as Larry Bird, a Captain Morgan coconut, and one of his all-time favorites - a mouth-watering, 14-foot-high deluxe cheeseburger.

He said that during the past several years, advances in com-

puter imaging have taken away much of the billboard market for painters.

"I have a very strong background in representational art," Neary said, "But my schooling prepared me for a broader range of approaches to painting than commercial representations on billboards. It's just difficult to make a living as an artist. Notwithstanding, even when I was working full time as a billboard painter, I kept at my private art, but I didn't have the time to really go forward with it."

"I usually paint based on perception. I like to use traditional subjects for my paintings such as people, landscapes and still lifes, so I can observe them first hand. I love to sit outside my house backyard in my gazebo studying the landscape, and then painting what things actually look like to me. A painting is what you see and why you see it. They are one of the few physical objects that people look at without a practical reason."

"Before photography, people had a more varied everyday perception of reality. Visual conventions were more personal. What does it look like to me? Nowadays there is cultural consensus that photography represents reality, but that is not so, because a camera only has one eye."

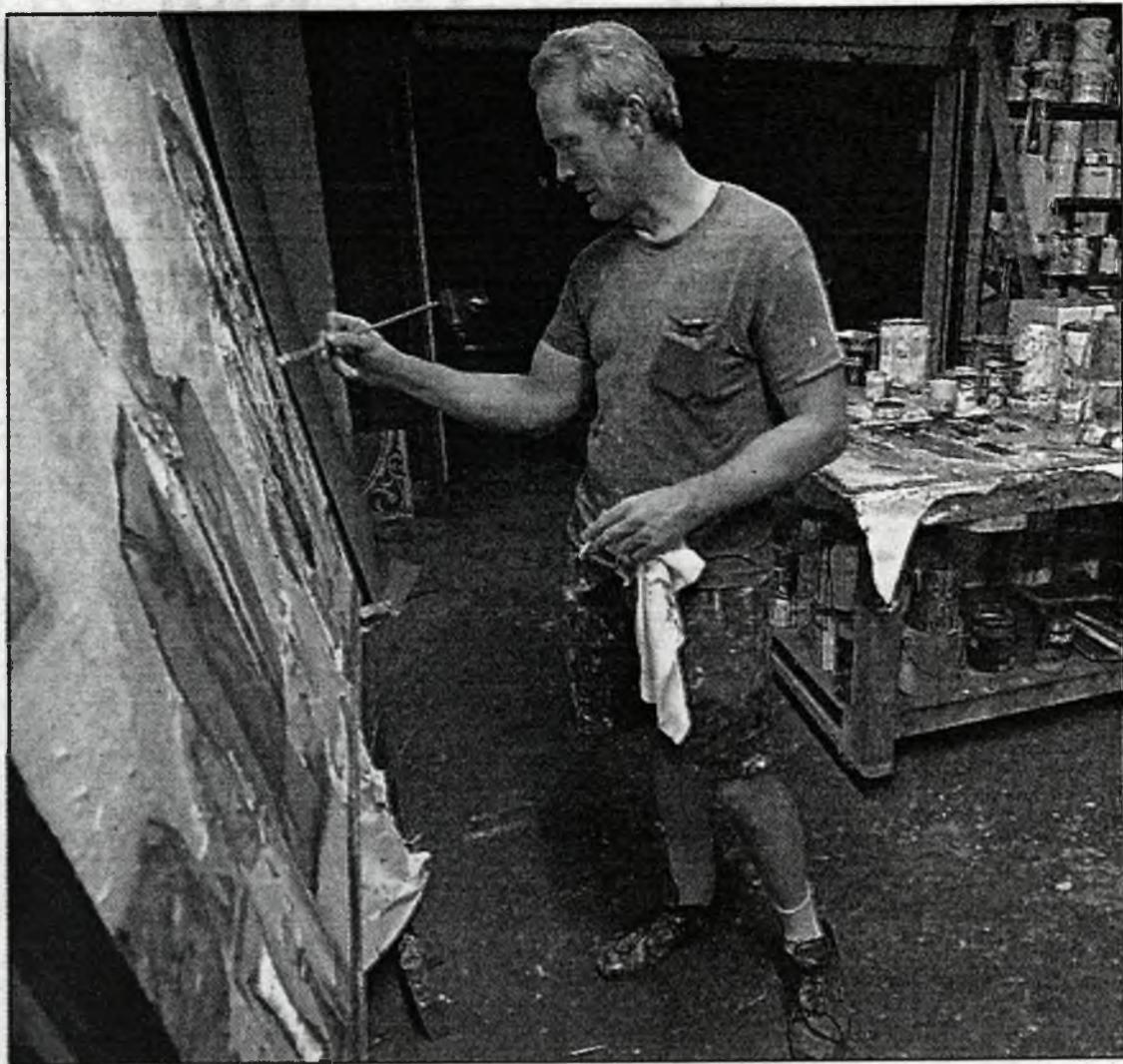
"I want to achieve a certain kind of directness with my art, so I try to put down my impressions on canvas in a way that hopefully stimulates people to study my paintings in more than just a cursory way. I would invite the viewer to feel the painting as expanding visual radiance rather than seeing it conventionally receding into the distance."

The painting techniques that bring about this forward propulsion are sophisticated, but the finished artwork itself looks a little raw."

Neary believes one of his most important practical lessons as an artist is becoming aware that painting has all too often lost touch with the public during the last 50 years.

"Now visitors to galleries often can't connect with much of the stuff they see."

► Turn to NEARY, D7



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Express yourself: Artist Michael Neary works on a painting in his garage. Neary came to Terre Haute from Indianapolis as a billboard painter for Whiteco nine years ago.

What To Do If You Are Feeling Stress From The Tragic Events Of September 11

It is absolutely normal to feel strong and painful emotions following an event like this terrorist attack. The American Red Cross has been on the scene from the beginning providing disaster support in the form of blood, food, shelter and mental health counseling to all individuals affected. Here are some helpful tips in dealing with the extreme mental and emotional stress caused by this event.

What Can I Do?

- Avoid viewing repeated media coverage of the event.
- Talk it out!
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Listen to other people.
- Be especially kind to others.
- Spend time with your family.
- Return to your usual routine.
- Find a peaceful, quiet place to reflect and gain perspective.
- Do something that could help others—make an appointment to give blood, take a first aid or CPR class.

For more information about how you can help, contact your local American Red Cross chapter or visit www.redcross.org.



American Red Cross.

of the Wabash Valley

Together, we can save a life

Neary: People who are part of Terre Haute history in one piece

► Continued from D6

"This is unfortunate. As recently as the 19th century, art was something average folks widely enjoyed. In the early 1800s, carnivals carried wagons full of paintings for people to see at fairs. The advent of popular electronic medium like movies and television has stolen the attention of many people who traditionally would have liked painted art."

"Also, nowadays many creative people are attracted by the greater commercial possibilities in electronic enterprise. If they lived in our era, Leonardo De Vinci and Michelangelo might have been movie directors."

"Nonetheless, I love to paint. It's a union of intellectual and physical impulses. I enjoy doing other things, but not anything else as much as painting."

Neary was born in Bloomington but moved widely around the United States when he was growing up, because his father worked for the Boeing Aircraft Corp. and was often transferred. When Neary was in high school, he started painting. His sheer love for the art form has kept him working at it for more than 30 years.

He studied art formally at Indiana University, the Art Institute of Chicago, Skow-Hegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the Kansas City Art Institute.

Neary credits Stan Lewis, an art instructor he met at the Kansas City Art Institute, with being his most important teaching influence.

"Stan really got me started doing perceptual painting," Neary said.

The importance of direct observation is so important to Neary that he sometimes will

sculpt models and place them in an actual model setting before he begins painting.

In the case of his recently completed painting for Java Haute, Neary and coffee shop owner Sharene Hilligoss started the project by brainstorming on what kind of painting might stimulate people to share ideas over a cup of coffee.

Together they conceived of famous personages in the history of Terre Haute sitting around a table having coffee. The proposed idea would join together in the same room Eugene Debs, the labor organizer; Mordecai "Three Fingers" Brown, the Hall of Fame baseball player; Theodore Dreiser, writer; Paul Dresser, musical composer; Willa Brown, pioneering African-American female pilot; Caroline Peddle-Ball, artist; and Blessed Mother Theodore Guerin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.

Overlooking the historical characters would be a picture within a picture of William Henry Harrison, former United States president, and the man who supervised the building of Terre Haute's Fort Harrison around the time of the War of 1812.

Neary then built a scale model clay set of the coffee table gathering, complete with his characters in their forward-thrusting poses. After creating the model, he experimented in his studio with a variety of compositional angles by studying the model from behind a special perspective frame he occasionally uses.

Even before appearing on the wall in Java Haute, the painting created conversation.

"People were in here asking where was the painting for days before we hung it," says Java

Haute manager Doug Stallard. "Now it creates conversation

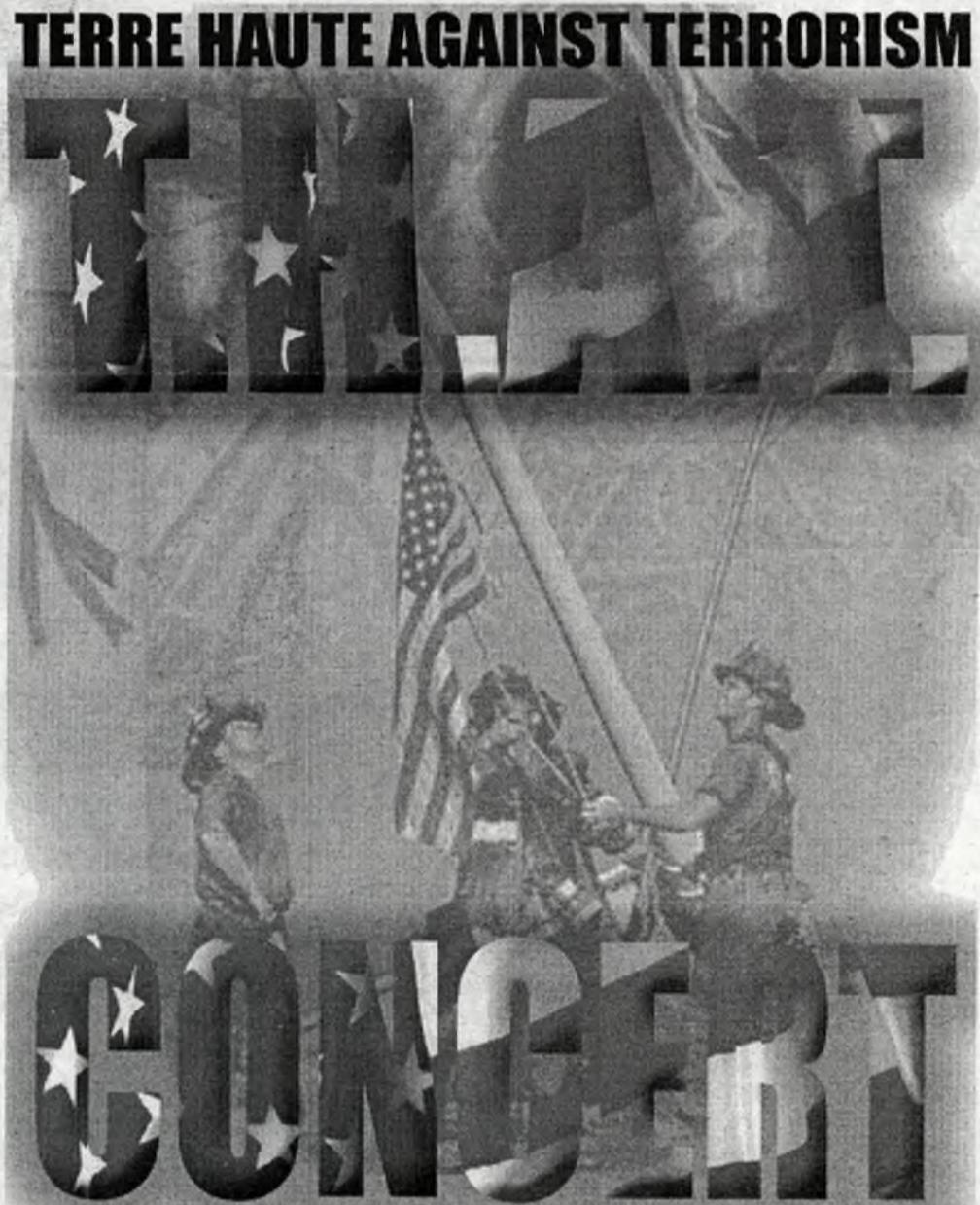
every day. Some people come in just to see. The painting is very

inviting. You feel like you're part of the scene."



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

A Michael Neary original painting depicts a casual time at a local watering hole.



Terre Haute volunteers have come together to bring you an evening of patriotic and sacred music. As you listen to the inspiring and healing music, your donations will benefit four funds: American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way September 11 Fund and New York Rescuers Relief through the Terre Haute Police Department. Performers include choirs from more than 20 churches, ISU and Rose-Hulman, North and South high schools, Sacred Heart School, Banks of the Wabash Chorus, ISU Wind Ensemble and more. See the Air National Guard Color Guard present the flag and hear comforting words from representatives of different faiths. The concert is sponsored in part by...



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